2012 FMPP Grants - Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently asked questions about eligibility

Q: Are for-profit organizations eligible under FMPP?

A: Yes. For-profit entities are eligible under FMPP. The organization must, however, meet the definition of a producer network or producer associations, as follows:

<u>Producer network</u> – A producer group- or member-owned organization or business that provides, offers, or sells agricultural products or services through a common distribution system for the mutual benefit of the members thereof.

OR

<u>Producer association</u> – An organization or other business that assists or serves, represents, or serves producers or a producer network.

★Note: All eligible entities must be identified accordingly and legally by a State or Federal Agency. The "organization or business" MUST support operations that include two or more farmers, producers, and farm vendors who produce and sell their agricultural products or services directly to consumers (not customers).

Q: What are some examples of written proof of eligibility from a U.S. State or Federal source?

A: Examples of written proof of eligibility include an IRS letter of determination (of 501(c)(3) status for example), articles of incorporation, city charter, State resolution, etc. (see Section VI.B. of the FMPP Guidelines.

★Note: Applications that do not include written proof of eligibility will be considered incomplete and eliminated from the eligible applications pool.

Frequently asked questions about the application process

Q: When is the application deadline?

- A: The application deadline is May 21, 2012; all applications must be **RECEIVED** via Grants.gov on or before 11:59 p.m. EST on May 21, 2012.
- Q: Will FMPP accept applications DELIVERED, RECEIVED, OR POSTMARKED after the deadline?
 - A: No. FMPP will not accept ANY paper, mailed, hand-delivered, faxed, electronic,

or emailed applications (see Section V. of the FMPP Guidelines.

Q: What is required in the FMPP application package?

- **A:** Your application package must contain:
 - ✓ <u>Completed</u> Form SF-424 including the required attachments below
 - ✓ Completed Form SF-424A
 - ✓ Completed Form SF-424B

The following documents or "Attachments" MUST be saved as a single PDF file and uploaded into the SF-424 document in Grants.gov:

- ✓ Written Proof of Eligibility from a U.S. State or Federal source
- ✓ Written Evidence of Contractor/Sub-awardee (receiving \$25,000 or more in the budget) CCR Registration and DUNS Number
- ✓ Written Evidence of Contractor/Subawardee's Debarment Status, as applicable
- ✓ Completed form TM-29 Project Proposal Narrative, with headings, that includes the required information addressing each heading's topic(s)
- ✓ Completed TM-30 Supplemental Budget Summary (All Project Activities Other Than EBT) OR TM-31 Supplemental Budget Summary – EBT Projects Only (as applicable for new and/or existing EBT projects)
- ✓ Supporting Document(s), as applicable
 - ★Note: Applications that omit any of the information listed above will be considered incomplete and will be rejected for review consideration, as will those that fail to follow application instructions, including those that contain multiple mixed projects (such as non-EBT and EBT)(See Section III.E. of the FMPP Guidelines.

Q: Does my State participate in intergovernmental review of FMPP applications? What does this mean?

A: Some States participate in intergovernmental review under Executive Order 12372 that allows them to review your application for Federal funding. Visit http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants spoc to see if your State participates in this type of review, and if they include FMPP in their list of programs for review. If your State does not appear on the list it has chosen not to participate in such review. Applicants are encouraged to check this list as soon as possible as it may affect the application timeline. Regardless of whether or not your State participates in this intergovernmental review, ALL applications must be received by FMPP no later than the application deadline.

Q: How will I know FMPP received my application?

A: FMPP recommends that you print your Grants.gov confirmation for your records as proof of timely delivery. Applicants that provide FMPP an e-mail address (on form SF-424, question #8) will also receive e-confirmation of receipt from FMPP within 1.5 months of their submission (see Sections VI.B. of the FMPP Guidelines.

Frequently asked questions about Grants.gov submissions

- Q: If I have problems with Grants.gov, will FMPP staff help me submit or accept my application package after the deadline?
 - **A: No.** FMPP will not provide applicants technical assistance with the Grants.gov system (see Section VI.B. of the FMPP Guidelines. The Grants.gov technical support center can be reached at 800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.
 - ☼ Tip: Start the Grants.gov process at least four weeks prior to the deadline. FMPP will not accept ANY applications after the deadline.
- Q: Why does Grants.gov forms SF-424 (SF-424A and SF-424B) NOT indicate that other documents are required for an FMPP application?
 - **A:** Grants.gov Forms SF-424, SF-424-A, and SF-424B are used by other Federal grantors. They are not, therefore, exclusively FMPP's form. Form SF-424 document does state that applicants are to upload and "Attach supporting documents as specified in agency instructions." Under FMPP, these required documents include:
 - Proof of eligibility
 - Evidence of all contractor and sub-awardee debarment status
 - Proof of qualifying status for Priority Project designation
 - Form TM-29, Project Proposal Narrative
 - Form TM-30, Supplemental Budget Summary, non-EBT AND/OR
 - Form TM-31, Supplemental Budget Summary and Instructions, EBT Projects Only (See Section III E. EBT/Non-EBT Project Application Submission Matrix for which budget form(s) to use for your project)
 - Other supporting documents (letters of support, resumes, etc.)
- Q: What happens if I forget to include one of the documents in my Grants.gov application?

A: Your application package will be <u>rejected for review consideration</u>. The only means of making a correction or adding to a Grants.gov application is re-submitting a new application prior to the deadline.

Frequently asked questions about project activities

- Q: I'm submitting on behalf of one organization for a project with multiple (i.e., EBT and "other," non-EBT) activities. Why are two applications required in 2012 one for the EBT project and a second for the non-EBT project?
 - A: During previous years, peer reviewers have informed FMPP staff that a clearer determination of the merits of a proposal could be determined if the applicant would concentrate on justifying one project activity, instead of two. It is expected that it is easier for an applicant to prepare a more competitive proposal, and for a reviewer to assess the merits of a proposal if efforts are devoted to either EBT or non-EBT, and not both simultaneously. Therefore, FMPP now requires that EBT proposals be submitted separate from non-EBT applications to provide applicants the opportunity to focus on the individual project activity.
 - ☼ Tip: In some instances you may need two applications (and three budgets). See Section III.E. of the <u>FMPP Guidelines</u> to determine the appropriate number of FMPP applications.

Q: What are the limitations and exceptions of FMPP grants?

A: Grant awards are limited to \$100,000, with a minimum award of \$5,000. Matching funds are not required. Applications are usually due in the spring, and AMS announces awards in September, at the end of the fiscal year. Funds become available to grantees beginning in October. Projects must be completed within 24 months. All applicants must be domestic entities, i.e., owned, operated, and located within one or more of the 50 United States, its territories and the District of Columbia.

FMPP does not award grants capital expenditures for general purposes, including purchases of building(s); construction, repair, or rehabilitation of building(s); and land acquisition.

Frequently asked questions about proposal development

- Q: Can I get a copy of an award winning application so I can use it to prepare my application?
 - **A:** No. FMPP does not share or forward successful or non-successful grant applications.
- Q: How can I find out about awarded or completed FMPP projects?
 - **A:** FMPP posts awardees and finished projects on its website.

Q: Will FMPP staff review or edit my application/project narrative before I submit my (official) application?

- **A:** No. FMPP will not review any portion of the grant application prior to the due date, or provide comments about the application during the review and selection processes.
 - ☼ Tip: Additionally, FMPP staff does not implement a pre-proposal or letter of intent application system. In order to assist applicants in a fair and comprehensive manner, FMPP has prepared three additional documents:
 - ✓ A Pre-Application Guide
 - ✓ Guidance on How to Apply for an FMPP Grant and
 - ✓ Guidance on <u>FMPP Performance Measurement and Evaluation</u>

Q: Do I have to use Forms TM-29 (narrative)?

- A: Yes. The form is mandatory to facilitate the reviewing process. (See Section V.G)
 - Tip: If the project narrative is submitted in another format the entire application will be rejected for review consideration.

Frequently asked questions about budget development

- Q: Do I have to use Forms TM-30 (supplemental budget summary), and TM-31 (supplemental budget summary EBT projects only)?
 - **A:** Yes. The forms are mandatory to facilitate the reviewing process (see Section V.G.) of the FMPP Guidelines.
 - ☼ Tip: If the supplemental budget summaries are submitted in another format the entire application will be rejected for review consideration. See Section VI.F. of the <u>FMPP Guidelines</u> for the supplemental budget summary, and fill in your project budget requests.

Q: If I prepared Form-424A, do I also need to prepare a Supplemental Budget Summary?

- A: Yes. Both Form SF-424A and Supplemental Budget Summary are required. If your proposal contains a new and existing EBT project, then you are required to provide a second Supplemental Budget Summary (see Sections III.E. and V.G.15. of the FMPP Guidelines for more information).
- Q: When must I prepare three Supplemental Budget Summaries?
 - A: You only complete three Supplemental Budget Summaries (detailed budgets) if you are requesting funds for items purchased under a "new EBT project" activity, "existing EBT project" activity, AND "other" activities.

For example: Three project activities are: 1) purchasing terminals for a new EBT program at one farmers market ("new EBT project"), 2) purchasing terminals for an existing EBT program at another farmers market ("existing EBT project"), and 3) purchasing new tents for farmers ("other" activity). In this instance, three supplemental budget summaries must be submitted to FMPP.

- ★Note: As mandated by Congress, 10 percent of the total FMPP budget goes toward "new EBT projects." As such, these new EBT proposals are reviewed separately from "other" and "existing EBT" activity proposals. The "other" and "existing EBT" activities will compete with all other non-EBT projects.
- **★Note:** You must use budget forms TM-31 (new EBT), TM-31 (existing EBT), and TM-30 (non-EBT) to complete your required supplemental budget summaries. In the above example, the three detailed budgets will be reviewed and scored by different peer reviewers and each budget must stand alone.
- **★Note:** You must also submit two separate FMPP applications:
 - ✓ One application for the "new EBT" and "existing EBT" project activities
 - ✓ A second application for the "non-EBT" activities
- See section III.E. of the <u>FMPP Guidelines</u> to determine which and how many supplemental budget summaries are appropriate for your application.
- Q: I prepared my SF-424A (general budget summary) AND Supplemental Budget Summary (detailed, itemized budget). Must I also include a budget narrative in my Supplemental Budget Summary?
 - A: Yes. A written, narrative justification of the budget is required to document actual cost and use of each budget item, and to correlate cost items with project activities, goals, and objectives. Each supplemental budget summary must be justified with a narrative that includes an actual cost estimates [e.g. on the basis of price analysis, vendor quote, cost per unit (including staff time), etc.] for each item. Each budget item should additionally be correlated to the purpose/goals of the project, e.g., each expense should be allocated to a necessary project activity. This detailed budget information is required and failure to include this justification will be grounds to reject the application for further consideration. This information supplements, but does not replace, the SF-424A.

Frequently asked questions about the page limit

Q: I used form Project Proposal Narrative Form TM-29 to complete my narrative; must I

complete question #17 (my proposal activities)?

A: Yes. Completion of question #17 helps staff record and understand applicant needs.

Q: Are questions #16 and 17 counted in the 12-page limit?

A: No. Questions #16 and #17 <u>DO NOT</u> count against the 12-page limitation.

Q: What part(s) of my application counts toward the 12-page limit?

- **A:** The FMPP proposal <u>narrative</u> must not exceed 12 pages. Only the following portions of the narrative count toward the FMPP 12-page limit:
 - ✓ Project title and Applicant/organization information
 - ✓ Primary project manager information
 - ✓ Requested FMPP funding and matching funds
 - ✓ EBT, equipment, supplies, and promotional projects (questions)
 - ✓ Entity type/eligibility statement
 - ✓ Executive summary
 - ✓ Goals of the project
 - ✓ Background statement (excluding the priority project information)
 - ✓ Work plan and resource requirements (including timelines)
 - Expected outcomes and project evaluation (excluding the priority project information)
 - ✓ Beneficiaries
 - ✓ Evaluation criteria statements
 - ✓ Existing and pending support

Frequently asked questions about the FY-2012 priority #1 – Increasing Food Access in Food Deserts

Q. What is the 2012 increasing food access in food deserts priority?

A: In a coordinated effort to enhance healthy food access in urban and rural areas in the United States, funding priority has been given to the development and expansion of direct producer-to-consumer marketing outlets that sell healthy foods in food deserts (areas with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly areas composed of predominantly lower-income neighborhoods and communities) or low-income areas (where the percentage of the population living

in poverty is at least 20 percent). Projects addressing either of these priorities will receive 5 additional points in the project scoring process.

Q. What is a food desert?

A. Food desert: an "area in the United States with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly such an area composed of predominantly lower income neighborhoods and communities" (Title VI, Sec. 7527).

Q. Do I have to have to submit a food desert project to be considered for an FMPP grant?

A. No. While projects that the food desert priority are being encouraged, all eligible activities will receive full consideration for funding.

Q. Does my organization have to be located in a food desert to receive priority points for an FMPP grant?

A. No. The organization does not have to be located in a food desert community. However, the proposed project, MUST BE IMPLEMENTED in a food desert community. More information about food deserts is available in the FMPP Guidelines for FY 2011 and at the USDA Food Desert website at http://apps.ams.usda.gov/fooddeserts. FMPP has designated projects in food deserts as a priority for the 2012 grant program to improve access to healthy foods in areas where they are hard to find or is unaffordable. Eligible project activities located in non-food desert communities will continue to be considered for FMPP funding.

Q: How will I know if my proposed FMPP project is located in a food desert?

A1: To determine if your project is located in a food desert, visit the USDA Food Desert website at http://apps.ams.usda.gov/fooddeserts/foodDeserts.aspx and USDA/ERS "Food Desert Locator" instructions at the bottom of the page.

In order to be considered as a 'food desert project' the application MUST include the: 1) project implementation address (street address, city, state, zip code, and county), 2) a brief description of the targeted low-access population, and 3) the 11-digit Tract FIPS Code for that address formatted as XX-XXX-XXXXX.

If a project is not in a food desert but will be implemented in a low-income area with at least a 20 percent poverty rate, the application MUST include the: 1) project implementation address (street address, city, state, zip code, and county),

2) a brief description of the targeted low-access population, and 3) poverty rate (for "all people in poverty (2010)" data). To find the poverty rate for your county visit http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/povertyrates and click on your State. Locate and record the appropriate county poverty rate (must use the 2010 data rate for "all people in poverty") for your project implementation address.

A2: Additionally, your project must:

- Include "Food Desert Project" in the title.
- Be designed to develop new marketing outlets such as farmers markets, CSA, and roadside stands in a food desert community.
- Q. My project is not an FMPP priority (food desert/low-income area) activity; can I still receive a grant?
 - **A:** Yes. All eligible projects will be considered for awards.
- Q. Does my organization have to identify an output(s), outcome(s), and monitoring mechanism(s) for the priority projects to receive an FMPP grant?
 - **A:** Yes. The narrative MUST completely explain/identify how the proposed project will successfully accomplish its goals. Required information includes, but is not limited to:
 - ✓ A description of what is to be accomplished, the expected results, and how success will be measured at the completion of the project (quantitative and qualitative evaluation measurement of project's impact).
 - ✓ Baseline data and benchmarks necessary to measure the progress of a project.
 - ✓ A logic model that contains outputs, outcomes, and performance measures (monitoring mechanisms).
- Q. My project is not an FMPP priority (increase farmer/producer revenue) activity; can I still receive a grant?
 - **A:** Yes. Project eligible projects will receive full consideration for awards.

Frequently asked questions about other topics

- Q: What is the grant timeline after I submit my FMPP application?
 - **A:** April thru May 2012 FMPP will receive grant applications from eligible entities.

May thru July 2012 – FMPP will select peer reviewers that will review and rate the proposals and make recommendations.

July/August 2012 – FMPP will contact those applicants recommended by peer reviewers' panels to finalize budgets and the proposal's goals and objectives.

August and September 2012 – Recommended proposals will move through USDA final agency approval system.

Before end of September 2012 – USDA officials will announce 2011 FMPP award recipients.

October/November 2012 – Selected awardees complete the mandatory orientation and training, start their projects, and received funding.

Q: Can I apply for an FMPP grant this year if I was awarded a grant in 2011?

A: No. AMS will not award consecutive grants to any eligible entity. Any entity that has received a grant award may apply for future grants after: 1) completion of the current grant project, 2) AMS has received and accepted all required documentation and reports for that current grant, AND 3) the awardee has received the AMS/FMPP grant close-out letter. See Sections VI.D. and XI. of the FMPP Guidelines for additional information.

Q: Where can I get more help if I still have questions about the FMPP program or application?

A: FMPP staff strongly recommends that you read the FMPP Guidelines before placing a call. If you still have questions after reading the FMPP Guidelines, the FMPP staff can be reached at (202) 720-0933 or via e-mail USDAFMPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov.